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"THE CALLING OF DAN MATTHEWS"

FROM
HAROLD BELL WRIGHT'S
FAMOUS NOVEL

REPRODUCED IN PLAY FORM

BY E. R. ADAMS
NEW HAMPTON. MISSOURI

WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
PRICES ON REQUEST



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CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Dr .Oldham—Old doctor of Corinth.

Martha—His wife, active worker in Ladies' Aid.

Denny Mulhall—Crippled Irish boy (a gardener).

Mrs. Mulhall—Denny's widowed mother.

Dan Matthews—The Minister of Corinth.

Hope Farwell—A trained nurse.

Mam Liz—A negro servant.

Dr. Abbott—The young physician of Corinth.

Grace Conner—An outcast (a good girl with a bad reputation.)

Judge Strong—Member of the official board of Strong Memorial Church.

Elder Jordan—Also member of the church board.

COSTUMES MODERN.

REPRODUCED BY E. R. ADAMS.

New Hampton, Missouri.

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SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY.

ACT I.

SCENE—DR. OLDHAMS HOME IN CORINTH.

TIME—MORNING.

Dan Matthews, a young man from the Ozark regions, is called to preach for a church in Corinth. Dr. Oldham, who is not a church member, is the confidential friend of Dan. Dr. Oldham has two callers before Dan arrives. They are Denny Mulhall, a crippled Irish boy, who helps support his widowed mother by gardening, and Grace Conner, a good girl with a bad reputation. Elder Jordan and Judge Strong, who are of the old school, are the official board and are looking for heresy. All meet Dan at the station. Jud Hardy, the town bully, attacks Denny Mulhall and seriously injures him. Dan rushes in and gives him the thrashing he deserves. Hope Farwell, a trained nurse, arrives on the scene and the procession carries Denny to Dr. Oldham's home. Everyone wonders, "Who is he?" Who are they?"

ACT II.

SCENE—GRACE CONNER'S HOME.

TIME—EARLY MORNING.

Grace Conner tries to commit suicide. Mam Liz, a negro woman rushes in and, seeing the girl, sends for Dr. Abbott. An antidote is given and Grace lives. Dr. Abbott sends for Miss Farwell. She takes the case. Meanwhile, Dan Matthews, the minister, calls, and, bitterly, Miss Farwell tells him, "This is the result of the church's work."

ACT III.

SCENE—MRS. MULHALL'S HOME.

TIME—MORNING.

Mrs. Mulhall is weeping because tomorrow Judge Strong is to foreclose the mortgage on their little home. Hope Farwell, who with Grace Conner has rented rooms of Mrs. Mulhall, tries to comfort her. Dan calls in and learns that he has new neighbors. Hope and Dan have a heart to heart talk and he tells her he loves her. She refuses to be his wife as long as he is in the ministry. Judge Strong comes to claim the Mulhall home and Dan tells him that he is an unrepentable thief; that he can prove that the mortgage has been paid. Hot words follow and Dan tells him that he will give him until tomorrow night to return the mortgage and interest paid to Mrs. Mulhall.

ACT IV.

SCENE—DAN'S STUDY.

TIME—AT NIGHT.

Dan tries to work out his sermon on "The Christian Ministry" but fails. Dr. Abbott and Dr. Oldham call, and they have a confidential chat. Just as Dr. Abbott leaves, Elder Jordan calls to plead Brother Strong's case. He wishes to cover up the theft because Judge Strong is an elder in Memorial church. He also notifies Dan that his services are no longer desired. Judge Strong pays a call to return the papers. He is very impudent and when Dan asks him to retract the slanderous words against Hope Farwell, which he uttered, he refuses. Dan beats him lifeless. Dr. Oldham, chuckling, offers to take him home and report an accident. Dan declares his intention of making Hope Farwell his wife and returning home to serve mankind in other ways, and to travel "The Trail That Is Nobody Knows How Old."

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Act I.

SCENE—Living room in Dr. Oldham's home, furnished with old fashioned furniture. An old lounge with patchwork quilt is across one corner of the room. Rag carpet covers the floor. An old fashioned stand table with red cover holds a large vase filled with the doctor's favorite roses. A fishing outfit stands in one corner. Religious pictures are very prominent on the wall.

Dr. Oldham is seated in an easy chair, smoking a huge pipe, as the curtain rises.

Dr. Oldham—(deeply meditating). His life—his life is like this day, fresh and clean and—full of possibilities.

(Enter Martha attired in breakfast dress and cap).

Martha—(disgustedly). Whatever are you muttering about now?

Dr. Oldham—I was wishing that I—that it would always be morning, that there was no such thing as afternoon, evening and night.

Martha—For a man of your age you do say the most idiotic things, wont you ever get old enough to think seriously?

Dr. Oldham—(smiling). If it were always morning, I would always be making love to the best and prettiest girl in the state.

Martha—(taking a chair and answering flashingly). There's no fool like an old fool.

Dr. Oldham—But a young fool gets so much more out of his foolishness. Talk about the responsibilities of age—hump! They are nothing compared to the responsibilities of youth. There's Dan now—

Martha—(interrupting all in a flutter). My goodness me, yes; and I've got a week's work to do before I can ever begin to get dinner. You go right off this minute and kill three of these young roosters out there in the coop—THREE MIND YOU.

Dr. Oldham—But my dear, he will only be here for dinner.

Martha—(shaking finger at him nervously). Never you mind. The dinner is my business. Kill three I tell you. I've cooked for preachers before. (exiting) I hope to the lord that he will start you to thinking about your eternal future, 'stead of mooning about the past.

Dr. Oldham picks up paper and tries to read, then rises, puts hands in pockets, walks to window and stands there in deep study.)

Dr. Oldham—(looking out with hands shading eyes). Wonder who that is coming across the lawn. Some of the honorable sisters coming to gossip about the new preacher I guess. Hump. Gosh I don't envy you Dan, old boy. I do believe upon my word that it is Grace Conners. Poor child. I do wonder what could bring her here.

(A sound as if some one falling against the door is heard, followed by shrieking, hysterical laughs.)

Dr. Oldham—(opening the door) Good G— child, what in the name of common sense is the matter?

(Grace staggers into the room with her face buried in her hands.) (Her clothes are very ragged.)

Dr. Oldham—(nervously) By, by God, child, this'll never do in the world. Maybe I can help you if you'll tell me what the matter is or what's wrong.

Grace—(still weeping) What difference does it make to any one what's wrong with that despised Conner's girl?

Dr. Oldham—It makes a big difference to you, girl. You should be at home.

Grace—(falls in a heap on the floor and laughs hysterically.) Home! Home!

Dr. Oldham—(attempting to help her rise to her feet). Stand up here and tell me what's wrong. Are you sick?

Grace—(rising and trying to gain composure). No sir.

Dr. Oldham—Well, what have you been doing?

Grace—(dropping into chair) Nothing. I've just been wandering around.

Dr. Oldham—Why don't you go back to the hotel? You are working there are you not?

Grace—(wringing her hands and crying) No! No! I don't live there any more.

Dr. Oldham—Well, where do you live?

Grace—Over in old town.

Dr. Oldham—Why did you leave your place at the hotel? Grace—

Grace—A man there said something that I didn't like, and then the boss told me that I must go, because some of the people were talking about me and I would give the hotel a bad name. Dr. I ain't a bad girl, ain't never been; but they're driving me to it. That or—or—It's the same every where I go or try to work, since father killed Jack Mulhail. At the canning factory the other girls said their folks would not let them work if I didn't leave. Dr. I haven't earned a cent since I left the hotel and I'm starving—(weeps again.)

Dr. Oldham—(roughly). Look here, why didn't you come to me sooner? You knew you could come to me; didn't I tell you too?

Grace—I—I—Mrs. Oldham, she—, she—the ladies aid, they all talk about me so. (crys again.)

Dr. Oldham—(aside to himself). Dam these gossipers. (turning to Grace and speaking tenderly). Look here Grace, you sit here for a few minutes. I'll be back shortly. You needn't fear Martha, she's gone over to Elder Jordan's to plan for the next meeting of the Ladies Aid and to tell what she's going to have for the preacher's dinner. (exits disdainfully.)

(Mam Liz enters with feather duster and collides with Dr. Oldham as he exits.)

Mam Liz—Lawdy sakes. Dr. Marsh Oldham, 'scuse me—'scuse me sah. I—I sure is in a hurry. Talking 'bout ministers, they sure is gwine to make a big fuss over this one. Yes sah, Yes sah. (upon seeing Grace she jumps back as if afraid of her, then she dusts all around her and haughtily ignores her.)

(Grace watches around the room and jumps at every sound.)

Dr. Oldham—(returns carrying basket and talking to himself) Confound the dad burned luck, that sure is a nice religion that makes a man steal from his own kitchen for the sake of charity. Here Grace, eat some of this chicken and bread and drink a glass of milk. (hands her food from the basket.)

(Grace eats ravishingly from the food; and Dr. Oldham crosses over to the window; and Mam Liz continues her work.)

Dr. Oldham—(chuckling to himself) Won't Martha rave when she discovers the theft? Ha! Ha! Too bad too, since the preacher is coming for dinner today.

Grace—(rising and taking her bonnet and basket) I—I—can't thank you enough, Dr. You have saved me from—

Dr. Oldham—(interrupting). There now, girl, don't cry. You go home now and be a good girl and mind you look carefully in the bottom of that basket. It will help you until times are better. And now if you run against it again, come to me or go to Dr. Harry at the office and tell him that you want me.

Grace—(exiting). Oh, thank God, some one cares for the poor Conners girl yet.

Dr. Oldham—(shaking his head sadly and talking to himself.) Some people are so busy attending to the devil's work that they forget the Lord's business entirely. Too bad, too bad and just to think that Martha is one of them. (speaking to the negro). Now Mam Liz, don't you dare to tell about that basket of grub. There would be a hell of a fuss if you should squeal on me.

Mam Liz—(excited). Squeal—squeal—it's mighty shore I won't sah. Sakes alive wouldn't Missus Oldham be as mad as fury yes sah, yes sah, she'd jist rare and cavort. Too bad sah you been plumb bad and the minister a coming and the pie and chicken gone. I feel just like I used too when I turned you across my apron and just walloped you good. Them poor white, trifling trash. To think of you doing the like of that to sech as them. There ain't no sense in sech doings no-how. (stands with arms akimbo and head tossed high).

Dr. Oldham—Now Mam Liz, you are some aristocrat.

Mam Liz—'ristocrat, 'ristocrat, yas sah, yas sah, that I is sah. I'se an 'ristocrat with good sense boss. You'll wish you'se an 'ristocrat too if missus finds out you've robbed the cupboard.

Dr. Oldham—That will do now Mam Liz, perhaps you had better go help Martha get some more eats ready for the preacher.

Mam Liz—(exiting). Yas sah, yas sah Boss, dat am shore so.

(The doctor picks up his paper and again reads. Whistling is heard outside.)

Dr. Oldham—(to himself). That is the Denny boy, I know. I'm glad to hear his merry tunes.

(Denny enters carrying a basket. He walks with a crutch, but has a smile on his boyish, Irish face.)

Dr. Oldham—(rising to greet him). Good morning, Denny. I'm mighty glad to see you.

Denny—(seating himself and resting his crutch on the floor). It's mighty fine you're looking this morning, Dr. Is it the 10:40 he's coming on?

Dr. Oldham—(blowing smoke into the air.) I believe it's the 10:40. And how are you feeling this morning, Denny?

Denny—(placing helpless arm across his lap.) Oh! I'm fine thank you. Mother is fine too, and my garden is doing pretty good for me. Oh we'll get along alright. I told mother this morning that the blessed Virgin had'n't forgotten us yet. I'll bet them pertaters will grow an inch some nights this summer. And look what a day it is for the fair

and the preacher's a coming too. (Dr. Oldham looks at his watch.) We're all so pleased at his coming, people have'n't talked of anything else for a month, that and the fair of course. Things in this town will liven up now, seems to me I can feel it—yes sir, I can. Somethings going to happen I'm sure.

Dr. Oldham—Hump! I feel rather that way myself. (pauses). I expect you two will be great friends, Denny.

Denny—(gladly) Oh, doctor, really—I—I—the minister won't have any time for the likes of a red headed Irish boy like me. And is he really going to live at Mrs. Morgan's there?

Dr. Oldham—(pointing). That is his room there. He'll be right handy to us both.

Denny—Now isn't that fine? Isn't it grand? That's such a nice room. Dr., it has such a fine view of the monument.

Dr. Oldham—Yes, the monument and your garden. (looks at watch again). It will soon be train time, Denny, so let's stop on the way and look at your garden.

Denny—(rising feebly and taking the crutches that the doctor hands to him and calls to Mrs. Oldham.) Here's a fine basket of vegetables I brought for the minister's dinner, Mrs. Oldham. It's out of me garden they are.

(Denny and the Dr. exit at right and Mrs. Oldham enters at left and takes up the basket.)

Martha—(as steps are heard outside.) Land sakes is that some one coming? I do wish people would stay at home and attend to their own business this morning. Sounds like the widow Mulhall's voice. Suppose she's coming to meddle too. I don't want her if she only knew it.

(Martha goes to door.)

Martha—Good morning, Mrs. Mulhall. I was just saying that I wished you would come over this morning.

Mrs. Mulhall—(enters fanning herself with her bonnet). Faith and it's expecting a new preacher ye are?

Martha—(hurriedly adjusting things in the room). Yes, yes, and I've a week's work to do before dinner. Mam Liz is helping with the kitchen work.

Mrs. Mulhall—(unwrapping a package) I jest ran over to bring you this cabbage. Denny came in such a hurry that he forgot it.

Martha—Thank you Mrs. Mulhall. I don't know what we would do without Denny and his garden. Did you see any of the church folks going to meet the train this morning?

Mrs. Mulhall—Faith and I did. I seen old Judge Strong, Elder Jordan, and Sister Jordan and Miss Charity.

Martha—Of course I should have known that little doll-faced Charity would have to go. Nothing could keep her away from the depot if she heard that an unmarried preacher was coming to town. Don't you know that she has been born and reared for a minister's wife. The doctor said she was even too nice to cry like other babies.

(train whistles)

Martha—There it comes now. My, I'm all in a flutter. You watch, Mrs. Mulhall and tell me when you see them coming this way. (grabbing up talcum powder can and powders freely). It's been a

long time since I used any powder but as a new minister is coming and as I am president of the Ladies Aid, I must look my best.

Mrs. Mulhall—(crossing over and looking out of window) That I will, Faith and begorra, I'd hate to be in that poor bye's place with them danged old hypocrites to jedge me actions.

There goes me poor Denny to the meat shop. Bet he thinks that he'il get a squint at the new preacher. Oh, do come here quick and see that there devil of a Jud Hardy. By the Virgin Mary, there's going to be trouble. Jest see him a raving like mad and see the wrath in his eyes.

(Martha excitedly goes to the window. Shrieks are heard and a voice says, "Get out of the way, you pink eyed dudes, I've got some for you, too.")

Martha—Who is he? That tall man?

Mrs. Mulhall—Oh, me poor Denny, he's killed, he's killed. MURDER! MURDER! (exits screaming)

Martha—(jumping up and down with excitement) Oh, look, that tall fellow is just mopping the earth with Jed Hardy. My sakes they're coming in here. Where's the minister? I hope they haven't forgotten him. That tall man can't be him because ministers don't fight. And there's a strange woman too. Who in the world can they be?

(The procession enters. Dr. Oldham and Dan are carrying Denny. Hope Farwell and Mrs. Mulhall bring up the rear. Mrs. Mulhall cries loudly and exclaims: Me poor Denny, me poor Denny, poor bye, at every breath.)

After placing Denny on the lounge and administering to his wounds Dr. Oldham turns and says: Martha, this is our new minister, Dan Matthews and this is the nurse who is to take the case at Judge Strong's.

(Martha opens her mouth wide with astonishment, as she takes his hand; Dr. Oldham chuckles to himself; Mrs. Mulhall weeps over Denny.)

CURTAIN.

Act II.

SCENE.—Grace Conner's room. The walls are very ragged and there is no carpet on the floor. The furniture consists of an old wooden bed, an old cupboard, a chair and small dilapidated table, with a few dishes on it. The light from the dirty lamp on the table is very dim.

Grace—(seated at the table, holding a small bottle of carbolic acid, looks at the bottle, places it on the table and weeps bitterly.) I don't want to do it. I don't want to die. Oh! why have they driven me to it? Why does God let me suffer so because of the treatment of His church people. Oh, nobody cares for the Conner's girl. (laughs hysterically.)

(Mam Liz rushes in and starts toward Grace.)

Mam Liz—What's the matter, honey?

Grace—(weeping). Oh! I can't live any longer! Everybody thinks that I'm bad and I'm afraid of everybody.

Mam Liz—(with arms akimbo). Law sakes, child, don't you think that dis nigger let anybody hurt you. Why me and your uncle George am right here. And don't let it worry you what them poor, trifling, white trash am a gwine to say. Hump! your aunt Mam Liz wouldn't step her foot on the likes of them.

Grace—Oh! why am I treated this way? They talk about me so.

Mam Liz—Don't you worry, white child. Lawdy sakes! The devil will sure grin when he gets them. Yas sah! He sure will, honey.

(Grace weeps bitterly. Mam Liz spies the bottle of acid on the table and jumps around trying to get out of the room.)

Mam Liz—(saluting) CARBOLIC ACID! CARBOLIC ACID! You don't catch dis nigger staying around dis jint. CARBOLIC ACID! CARBOLIC ACID! That means good bye any place.

(Mam Liz falls to the floor, because of her excitement to find the door, and rolls out of the room.)

(Grace rises and looks into several empty dishes, goes to the empty cupboard and turns back toward the table.)

Grace—(in supplication with eyes turned heavenward.) God, I'm oh so hungry. Oh! mother, why did you die and leave me? Can't you see that I'm so lonesome and hungry?

Grace—(crossing back to table and picking up the bottle.) I don't want to die. No money, no work, no food, no friends; what else can I do? OH! God, have mercy on my soul. (drinks acid, screams frantically, overturns table and chairs and acts as if in great pain.)

Mam—(rushing in). Lawdy sakes, child, now what's you gone and done? (Mam Liz wrestles with her and at last places her on the bed. Grace acts frantic and Mam Liz coaxes and tries to keep her on the bed.)

Mam Liz—(calling outside). George! George! Run for Dr. Harry quick! Quick! I tell you. Go faster than your old legs will take ye. Tell him this is a 'mergency case, an 'mergency case I tell you. Carbolic Acid! (saluting). Good bye.

Grace—(screaming and tossing on the bed.) I'm burning up! Oh! I'm so hot! Please let me die!

Mam Liz—(holding her on the bed). Hush, child honey, youse gwine to be alright soon. (to herself.) I do believe I hear that blessed man coming up the road now in his shay. The darling boy.

(While Mam Liz coaxes and works with her, Dr. Abbott hurriedly enters)

Mam Liz—May the God bless you, Dr. Harry, I'se never so glad to see you in all of my life. Carbolie, sah! Carbolie did it.

(Dr. Abbott goes quickly to the bed, completely ignoring the old darkey. He administers to the girl who strikes at him and moans wildly.)

Dr. Abbott—Mam Liz you help me straighten her out on the bed so she can rest presently.

Mam Liz—Yas sah, yas sah, Marsh Harry.

Dr. Abbot—I happened to be coming this way and met Uncle Geo. so I sent him for the nurse at Judge Strong's. As soon as they come we will relieve you of this.

Mam Liz—No trouble at ail, Marsh Harry. Only one thing, please take that carbolie acid from this house at once. (she shies round the bottle many times.)

Dr. Harry—(looking about the room.) How long has this poor child been living in this place?

Mam Liz—Every since she left the hotel, sah. Well lately she don't 'ppear to be doin as well as usual, and we got plumb scared of her, she acted so queer. A few minutes ago I heard a moanin and a screeching like in the poor girl's room here, and when I come in she was jest a throwing herself and a beggin to die. I got her here on the bed and sent for you sah, yas sah, yas sar. And I'se most tuckered out too. (Sighs).

Grace, who has been asleep, stirs and moans and Dr. Harry and Mam Liz hold her on the bed.)

(Hope Farwell, dressed in nurse's unifrom, appears.)

Dr. Harry—(glancing up). Carbolie acid. But she didn't get quite enough. I managed to give her an antidote and hyodermic. We had better repeat the hypodermic, I think.

(Hope takes her place at the bedside and soon the young woman rests quietly again.)

Dr. Harry—Mam Liz, you go and get some rest, you have had a tiring time. If we need you, we will send for you.

Mam Liz—(backing out of the room and looking at the acid bottle). Yas sah, yas sah.

Dr. Abbott—Miss Farwell, I am sorry that I was forced to send for you, but you can see that there was nothing else to do. I knew that you would come without the loss of time and I dared not leave her without a white woman in the room. (goes to bedside). Poor, poor little girl. She tried so hard to die, nurse. She will try again the minute she gains consciousness. These colored people will do anything for her, but she must see one of her own race when she opens her eyes.

Miss Farwell—She is a good girl, Doctor? Not that it matters but—

Dr. Harry—(positively interrupting). Yes, she is a good girl, nurse. It is not that.

Miss Farwell—(glancing around the room.) Then why is she here?

Dr. Harry—She is here because there seems to be no better place for her to go. She did this because there seemed to be nothing else for

her to do. Her father, you know, killed Jack Mulhall, our marshal; and shortly after that he was taken to prison, her mother died. Miss Farwell, sad but true, some of the church folks gossiped and told false things about her. They turned her out of the church, their wagging tongues followed her from one place to another, causing her to lose work; and now they have driven her to this, DRIVEN I SAY. Dr. Oldham and I tried to help her but some bad stories got out. She heard them and after that she avoided us. Here's the saddest case of all. Miss Farwell, a good girl with a bad reputation.

(Dr. Harry goes to patient. Miss Farwell takes a small pencil and tablet from her pocket and writes.)

Dr. Harry—(turning and taking up his hat). I must go to another case, Miss Farwell. I shall not keep you more than an hour. I think I know of a woman that we can get for today, at least. Perhaps we can get some one else or arrange it somehow. I'll be back in plenty of time, so don't worry. Your train does not go until 10:30, you know. If that woman can't come at once I'll ask Dr. Oldham to relieve you.

Miss Farwell—(smiling). I am very sorry, Dr. Abbott, if I am not giving satisfaction.

Dr. Harry—(amazed.) Not giving satisfaction? What do you mean?

Miss Farwell—You seem to be dismissing me. I understood that you sent for me to take this case.

(Miss Farwell continues writing).

Dr. Harry—Do you mean—

Miss Farwell—(looking up). I mean that unless you send me away I shall stay on duty.

Dr. Harry—But Dr. Miles—that case in Chicago—? I understood from you that was very important.

Miss Farwell—(smiling). There is nothing so important as the thing that needs doing now. And I do seem to be needed here.

Dr. Harry—And you understand that there will be no fees?

Miss Farwell—Is your work always a question of fees, Dr.? I am surprised at you. Cannot I collect my bill when you receive your's?

Dr. Harry—(holding out his hand.) Forgive me, Miss Farwell, but it is too good to be true. I can't say any more now. You are needed here—you cannot know how badly. I—we all need you. I will go and then be back later. Your patient will be alright for at least three hours. I'll send Uncle George for your breakfast.

Miss Farwell—Never mind the breakfast. If you will have him bring these things, I will get along nicely. (tears a sheet of paper from the tablet and hands it to him.) Here is a list that Mrs. Strong will give you from my room. And here is a list that he may get from the grocery. (tears another sheet of paper.) I have not my purse with me so he will have to bring the bills.

Dr. Harry—(looking at the slips of paper.) You really must not do that, Miss Farwell.

Miss Farwell—This is my case, you know, Dr.

Dr. Harry—It was mine first.

Miss Farwell—But Dr. —

Dr. Harry—Shall I send you my bill, too? (laughing.) We shall

settle that later. (as he exits.) If you need anything before I return just call Mam Liz.

(Miss Farwell straightens up the dishes; sweeps and dusts; steps out and brings in curtain material, which she puts up to the windows, places clean clothes on the bed, puts up pictures, and she almost completes her work, a low knock is heard. She opens the door and Dr. Oldham comes in with an armfull of roses.

Miss Farwell—(taking the flowers.) Oh! Dr. just what that I was wishing for. Aren't they lovely?

Dr. Oldham—Yes, yes. Harry told me what you were up to. Thought I had better come along in case you should need any help.

(Dr. Oldham draws his chair to the bedside and Miss Farwell continues her work. She places the roses, puts clean papers on the cupboard shelves and covers the table over with a clean linen.)

Dr. Oldham—(suddenly jumping up.) Darn the gossiping cligue! Darn them, I say! Ah! I beg—I—I beg your pardon, Miss Farwell. I was only thinking aloud.

Miss Farwell—(laughing). That's alright Dr. I can say amen to that. I believe I fully understand just how you feel about this case.

Dr. Oldham—(with a gesture toward the bed.) Nurse, you and Dr. Harry tell me that this is suicide. The people will think that this poor child wanted to kill herself, and they will call it suicide. But—by God! it's murder! MURDER I TELL YOU! She did not want to kill herself. She wanted to live to be strong and beautiful like you; but this community with it's churches, Sunday schools, and prayer meetings wouldn't let her. They denied her the poor privilege of working for the food that she needed. They refused even a word of sympathy. They hounded her into this stinking hole to live with the negroes. She may die, nurse, and if she does, as truly as there is a Creator who loves his creatures, her death will be upon the unspeakably cruel, pious, self-worshiping, churchified, spiritually rotten people in this town! It's murder, I tell you, by God it's murder!

(At the end of this outburst Dr. Oldham reaches for his hat and hastily exits.)

(The sick girl tosses and moans and Hope Farwell goes to her and tries to console her. When the patient sleeps, she crosses to the window and watches out.)

(Darkey songs are heard outside and she seems much amused by them.)

(A low knock is heard and Miss Farwell crosses over and opens the door with dignity. Dan Matthews stands in the doorway, hat in hand.)

Dan—May I come in? I called to see your patient. Dr. Oldham asked me to come.

Miss Farwell—(coldly.) Certainly, come in. (she places a chair for him by the bed and then again walks to the window.)

Dan—(still standing). She is still asleep?

Miss Farwell—(looking at watch.) She has been asleep nearly 2 hours.

Dan—Is there—will she recover?

Miss Farwell—Dr. Abbott says there is no reason why she should

not if we can turn her from her determination to die.

Dan—(awed and surprised.) Her determination to die—? Why should she wish to die?

Miss Farwell—(coldly.) Why should she wish to live?

Dan—I—I—do not understand.

Miss Farwell—(firmly.) I don't suppose that you do. How could you? Your ministry is a matter of schools and theories, of doctrines and beliefs. This is a matter of life.

Dan—My church—

Miss Farwell—(sarcastically.) Your church does not understand either. It is so busy earning money to pay it's minister that it has no time for such things as this.

Dan—(protesting.) But they do not know. I did not dream that such a thing as this could be.

Miss Farwell—You a minister of Christ's gospel and ignorant of these things. And yet this is not an uncommon case. Sir, I could tell you of many similar cases that have come under my observation, though not all of them have chosen to die. This girl could have made a living, I suppose you understand, but she is a good girl; so there was nothing for her to do but this. All that she asked was a chance, only a chance. They denied her this.

(Dan drops his head in silence.)

Miss Farwell—What right have you, Mr. Matthews, to say that you do not understand—that you do not know? It is your business to understand—to know. And your church—what right has it to plead ignorant of the life about it's very doors? If such things are not it's business, what business has the institution that professes to exist for the salvation of men? That hires men like you—as you yourself profess to minister to the world. What right have you or your church to be ignorant of the every day conditions of life? Dr. Abbott must know his work, I must know mine. The world demands it of us, and the world is beginning to demand of you and your church that you know your business.

Dan—(trembling.) But the people are not beasts. They do not realize. At heart they—we are kind. We do not mean to be carelessly cruel. Do you believe this, Miss Farwell?

Miss Farwell—Of course I believe it, but that does not alter the situation the least bit. The same thing could be said, I suppose, of those who crucified Christ. Your people give so much time, thought and love to your churches, that they have nothing left—nothing left for girls like this one.

(Negro voices are again heard and Hope Farwell, moved to tears, crosses over to window. Dan goes to the bed and looks at the sick girl.)

Dan—(slowly moving about.) Is there—no one who cares?

Miss Farwell—(coldly turning about). No one has made her feel that they do.

Dan—But you—surely you care.

Miss Farwell—(weeping.) Yes, yes I care. How could I help it? Oh, if we could only make her feel that we—that someone wants her, that there is a place for her, that there are those who need her—(goes to the bed and looks on the sleeping girl.) I—I won't let her go.

Dan—Let us help you Miss Farwell, Dr. Oldham asked that I should ask you if the church could help you. I am sure they would, should I present the case to them. This is the church's work, you know.

Miss Farwell—(looking scornfully at him.) Yes, you are quite right. This is the church's work. You have made it very evident, Mr. Matthews, that you know nothing of the matter. I have not doubt but that the church members would respond with a liberal collection, should you picture all that you have seen here in an eloquent, pathetic appeal. Some, in the fullness of their emotions, might offer their services; others' I am sure would send flowers. Before you do so, I ask you to inquire of Dr. Oldham why Grace Conner is here and why she wishes to die. (with an air of dismissal.) And now in consideration of my patient, who may awaken any moment, I dare not permit you to prolong this call.

Dan—(looks at the nurse bewildered, takes up his hat and exists.)

(Miss Farwell goes to the window and watches him leave, then goes to the bed and weeps silently.)

Miss Farwell—(to herself.) Oh, why am I growing so bitter? He did not mean any harm. The cruel injustice of this has overcome me. He is a good man. He cannot answer for the sins of this wicked town.

Grace—(opening her eyes and trying to raise her head.) Nurse—

Miss Farwell—(turning quickly) Yes, dear, what is it. Did you have a good sleep?

Grace—I was not asleep. I—oh nurse—is it true?

Miss Farwell—(laying her hand on the sick girl's forehead.) Were you awake while the minister was here?

Grace—Yes. I heard it all. Is it—is it true?

Miss Farwell—Is what true, child?

Grace—That you—that anyone cares?

Miss Farwell—(framing the girl's face with her hands.) Now don't you know that I care?

Grace—(clinging to the nurse's hands and kissing them again and again.) I'm not so bad, nurse. I have always been a good girl—even when I was so hungry. But they talked about me so, and even—made people think that I was bad, until I was ashamed to meet anyone. Then they put me out of the church, nobody would give me work in their homes; they drove me out of every place that I got, until there was no place but this. I was so frightened with all of these negroes in the house. Oh, nurse, I didn't want to do it but I thought that no one cared for me.

Miss Farwell—They did not mean to be cruel, dear. They did not understand. You heard the minister say that they would help you now.

Grace—(gripping Miss Farwell's arm and shaking her head.) They put me out of the church. They drove me to this. Don't. Promise me that you won't let them in.

Miss Farwell—There—there—dear. I will take care of you. No one can take you away from God. You must remember that.

Grace—Is there a God? Do you think that there is a God?

Miss Farwell—Yes, yes, dear. All of the cruelty in the world can't take God away from us if we hold on. We all make mistakes, you

know, terrible mistakes, sometimes. People with the kindest, truest hearts sometimes do cruel things without thinking. Why, I suppose those people, who crucified Jesus, were kind and good in their way. They didn't understand what they were doing. By and by you will learn to feel sorry for these people, just as Jesus wept over those, whom he knew were going to kill him. But first, you must get well and strong again. You will, won't you.

Grace—(falling back almost asleep.) .Yes, nurse. I'll try, now that I know you care.

CURTAIN.

Act 111.

SCENE—Mrs. Mulhall's kitchen. The furniture consists of an old cupboard, stove, two chairs, small table. The room is clean and neat. On a stool chair at one side of the room is a tub steaming with hot water. Mrs. Mulhall, dressed in a large, red "Mother Hubbard" dress and blue waist apron, with sleeves rolled high, is washing. Denny is sitting nearby reading.

(Mrs. Mulhall suddenly stops washing and weeps loudly.)

Denny—(trying to comfort her). Come, come, mother. Don't be taking on so. It will all come out somehow.

Hope Farwell—(standing in the doorway.) Why, Mrs. Mulhall, what in the world is the matter?

Denny—(patting her on the shoulder.) Come, come, mother. Look up. It is Miss Hope that is talking to you. Don't mother. We will make it alright. We've got to.

Miss Farwell—(going to her). Yes, yes, Mrs. Mulhall, do tell me your troubles.

Mrs. Mulhall—(drying her tears with her apron.) It's a shame for me to be going on so, Miss Hope.

Miss Farwell—Please do tell me your troubles. Maybe I can help you.

Mrs. Mulhall—Indeed, dear heart, don't I know that you've enough trouble of your own, without you loading up with mine and Denny's. Ain't I seen how you've been put to it for the last month to make both ends meet? You and Grace are having a hard time, ye know ye are. And you all of the time trying to look cheerful and bright to keep her heartened up. Many is the time, Miss Hope, have I seen that sad look on your sweet face, when you thought that no one was looking. And every night me and Denny prayed to the Blessed Virgin to soften the hearts of the people in this danged town. Oh, I know, I know. But it does seem that God has clean forgot us all together. I can't help believing that it would be different if we could only go to mass as decent folks ought to do.

Miss Farwell—But you and Denny have helped me more than I can ever tell you, so now you must let me help you.

Mrs. Mulhall—It's glad enough I would be to let you help and quick enough to, but nothing but money will do it. Can't I see by them old shoes that you are wearing and by that old last year's coat that you have earned just enough to keep you and Grace alive?

Miss Farwell—That is all true enough, Mrs. Mulhall, but I am sure that it will help you just to tell me your troubles.

Mrs. Mulhall—(shaking her fist in the air.) It's all because of that danged old hypocrite of a Judge Strong. Miss Farwell, he's the meanest man on earth. When me poor Jack died Judge Strong held a mortgage on this little home for \$850. Well don't ye know that me and poor Denny managed to pay the interest every year; so the darned old fool didn't dare to push this matter, 'cause of what folks would say. You see me poor Jack was killed on duty and we had the sympathy of this whole danged community, me and me Denny boy did. But you know, Miss Hope, that times have been pretty hard this year, so me and Denny have not been able to scrape the interest money this year. Judge Strong saw this as his chance to get our little home so

he has given us notice to get out tomorrow. (weeps again.)

Miss Farwell—Really, Mrs. Mulhall, I can hardly believe this. Have you no relatives, who could help? No friends? Perhaps Dr. Oldham—

Mrs. Mulhall—(shaking her head sadly.) There's only me and brother Mike in the family. Mike's a brick layer and would give the coat off his very back for me but he's been movin' about so over the country, hein, smile you, see that I can't get a letter to him. I did write to him where I heard from him last but me letter came back. He don't write often, thinking that me and Denny is alright. I ain't seen him since he was here to help put poor Jack away.

(Denny takes up a hoe and exits.)

Miss Farwell—(turning quickly). There is some one. Of course, why didn't we think of him before?

Mrs. Mulhall—(looking up hopefully). Faith and think of who, youngin'?

Miss Farwell—Mr. Matthews.

Mrs. Mulhall—But child, the minister's away with the Dr. fishing. And what good could he be doin' if he was here? He's that poor himself.

Miss Farwell—Oh I don't know just what that he would, but he would do something. He's that kind of a man.

Mrs. Mulhall—Faith and begorra, he is that, Miss Hope.

(Just then Dan enters clothed in fisherman's garb, and carrying a fishing pole.)

Mrs. Mulhall—(from over wash tub). Faith and I was never so surprised in me life. Bless the Virgin, it's talk of the angels and you can hear the flutter of their wings. It's a fishing we thought ye were.

Dan—No, Dr. and I did not get started last evening. We had unexpected business to delay us. (To Miss Farwell)—Really I did not know that—that you—

Miss Farwell—(looking up from her sewing.) Were your neighbors? Yes we are. Grace and I moved yesterday. (Mrs. Mulhall picks up tub and clothes and exits.) You see it was not good for her to remain in that place. It was all so suggestive of her suffering. I knew that Mrs. Mulhall had a room to rent, because I had planned to take it before I decided to go back to Chicago. The poor child had such a fear of everyone, that I thought it would help her to know that Mrs. Mulhall would be good to her, even though that it was Denny's father that her father—you know.

Dan— Yes, yes, I know.

Miss Farwell—I explained to Mrs. Mulhall and like the good soul that she is, she understood and made the poor child feel better right away. I thought too that if Grace was living here with Mrs. Mulhall, it might help the people to be kinder to her. Soon some one will give her the chance to earn her living and she will be alright. The people will soon act differently when they see how Mrs. Mulhall feels, don't you think so?

Dan—(taking a chair and looking bewildered.) Then you—you are not going away?

Miss Farwell—No. Not until Grace gets a good place. She will

need me until she finds a home, you know. Dr. Abbott has been promising me plenty of work. Grace and I are going to do light house-keeping here. Grace will do the house work while I am busy. You see in this way Grace will feel less dependent and it will not cost us so much that way: I wish to thank you, Mr. Matthews, for your help—for the money that you sent. The poor child needed so many things. And I wish to beg your—pardon—for—the shameful way that I treated you. I knew better but I was so overcome with the cruel neglect of the church people, that I could not keep from blaming the minister. Mrs. Mulhail has been telling me of your kindness to them—

Dan—(interrupting.) Please don't, Miss Farwell. I believe that I understand now. I am of life, you know I was born and reared in the backwoods. Until I went to college, I knew only our simple country life, at college I knew only books and students, then I came here.

Miss Farwell—So this is your first church?

Dan—Yes, and for the man not the minister, I ask that we be friends. Let's consider Denny's garden as common ground. We'll put a sign over the gate, "No professional ministry shall enter here; the minister lives up there. (points to window.)

Miss Farwell—I warn you that will not work. You and your ministry are the same. You know my honest opinion of your church and its people—not the Christian people, you understand. Look what they have done for Grace. I warn you that we cannot leave the minister on the other side of the gate and let you enter.

Dan—(nervously). I—I don't know what you will think, but I learned something yesterday that I think you ought to know, Miss Farwell. I feel I must tell you.

Miss Farwell—Go on please.

Dan—I—I had some callers and the things that I learned have worried me beyond words to express. It seems that from what Dr. Abbott says that people will not give you work because of Grace. Oh, Miss Farwell, you cannot afford to sacrifice your personal and professional reputation—think what it means to me—to you—to all of us.

Miss Farwell—(smiling sarcastically.) And you, too, wish to see my letters of recommendation? Shall I give you list of people to whom you might write?

Dan—(sadly.) Miss Farwell!

Miss Farwell—Forgive me. That was unkind.

Dan—Well, rather. You see I did not come to you with this for fun. (smiles grimly.)

Miss Farwell—(critically.) You don't seem to be enjoying it greatly. I can easily see how this talk might result in something very serious for you. Have I not just warned you that you cannot leave the minister on the other side of the fence? But of course you can easily avoid any trouble with your people, you have only to—

Dan—(firmly interrupting.) I did not intend to discuss the possibilities of trouble for myself. Please believe this—even if you do think me a servant of the church. Don't you see how this idle, silly talk is likely to harm you? You know what the same thing did for Grace Conner. It is really serious, Miss Farwell—believe me, it is or I should never have told you about it at all. Already Dr. Harry—

Miss Farwell—(quickly.) Has found some people, who will not

employ me because of things that are being said. I have known it for some time, instead of telling me lately of possible cases and telling me of work as he did at first, he has been saying, "I will let you know if anything turns up."

Dan—(eagerly.) Dr. Abbott has done everything that he could, Miss Farwell. I ought not to have mentioned him at all. You must know—

Miss Farwell—(dignified). Certainly I do not blame Dr. Abbott, not in the least. You are both very kind to consider me in this way, but really you must not be troubled about this silly gossip. I am not dependent upon the good people of Corinth, you know. I can go back to the city at any time. (slowly) perhaps that would be the wisest thing to do after all. It was only for Grace's sake that I have remained.

Dan—(eagerly). But you do not need to leave Corinth. This talk you know is all because of your companion's reputation.

Miss Farwell—You mean the reputation that people have given her.

Dan—So far as reputation goes it amounts to the same thing. It is your association with her. If you could arrange with some family now.

Miss Farwell—Grace needs me, Mr. Matthews.

Dan—But it is so unjust. The sacrifice is too great. You cannot afford to place yourself before this community in such a wrong light.

(Dan walks the floor with hands in his pockets. Hope calmly sews)

Miss Farwell—Are you not advocating the doctrines and policy of the people, who are responsible for the wrong light, rather than the teaching of Christ? Are you not speaking professionally? Haven't you forgotten our agreement to leave the preacher on the other side of the fence?

Dan—(embarrassed). Miss Farwell—you must not—you must not misunderstand me! I do not mean—I cannot bear the thought of you being misjudged because of this beautiful, Christian service. I was only seeking a way out.

Miss Farwell—No. I do not misunderstand you, but there is only one way out, as you put it. You must consider what the result will be if you are seen with me. (quickly)—with Grace and me. Can the pastor of Memorial Church afford to associate with two women of doubtful reputation? What will your church think? You see you will need to find a way out.

Dan—(crossly). I am not looking for a way out.

Miss Farwell—Ah! but you should. You must consider your reputation and influence. Consider the great harm your interest in Grace Conner will do your church. You must remember your position in the community. You cannot afford to—risk your reputation.

(Dan clinches his fist).

Really there is no reason that you should suffer from this. It is not necessary for you to continue our little friendship. You can stay on the other side of the fence. I—we will understand. You have too much at stake. I—

Dan—Miss Farwell, I don't know what you think of me that you can say those things. I had hoped that you looked upon me as a man, not as a mere preacher. I had dared to think that our friendship

was growing to something stronger. If I am mistaken, I will stay on the other side of the fence. If I am right, if you do care for me, I will serve my people faithfully, but I will not shape my life by their foolish, wicked whims. Denny's garden may get along without me and you may not need our friendship, but I need Denny's garden and I need you.

Miss Farwell—(gladly). Forgive me. I only wished to know that you understand some things clearly.

Dan—I am beginning to understand a good many things.

Miss Farwell—And understanding, you will still come to work in Denny's garden? (smiling).

Dan—(laughing boyishly). Yes, just as if there was no other place in the world where I could get a job. (crossing to her.) Hope, don't you know that I love you?

Miss Farwell—(withdrawing). Yes, yes, and can you doubt that your love is returned? It is your right to tell me and it is my right to tell you, but that must be all.

Dan—All?

Miss Farwell—All. I have not changed my opinion of your ministry and your ministry is your life. Knowing this can't you see that I can never be more to you than I am now.

(Dan drops his head, buries face in his hands. Tears come in Hope's eyes and she starts to stroke his hair but silently withdraws to the window.)

Dan—(raising his head and speaking sadly.) Tell me, if I were any thing else, if I were engaged in any other kind of work, would you be my wife?

Miss Farwell—Why do you ask that?

Dan—Because, I must know.

Miss Farwell—If you were a common laborer, a business or a professional man, if your work was anything honorable and right, save what it is—yes, gladly, or, how gladly.

Dan—(rising.) Then I will give up my work. I will do something else. (walks the floor.)

Miss Farwell—Hush! Oh hush! I have learned to love you because you are so truly yourself, because you are so true to yourself. You must not disappoint me now. I know you won't. I know that this is your chosen life work according to your conscience, if you ever change, then come to me and I will be your wife. Whether you do or not, you must always believe that I love you; that I shall always love you and that I shall never, never doubt your love for me.

(Dan picks up his hat and staggers toward the door.)

Mrs. Mulhall—(entering the room). Don't be in a hurry, Mr. Matthews. It is very fine for fishing, indeed.

Dan—Yes and I promised the Dr. that I would only be here for a few minutes. I wanted to speak to the Denny boy. How is he?

Mrs. Mulhall—Fine, fine, it's a workin' he is. (someone knocks and all jump in surprise.) I wonder who now? (goes to door.) It's good mornin', Judge Strong. Come in.

(The Judge haughtily enters but seems much disturbed at the sight of Dan and Hope.)

Judge Strong—Eh!—heh—well—howde do, Brother Matthews, hardly knew you. I thought that you were at Gordon's Mill fishing. It's a mighty fine prayer meeting that we had last night, too bad that you couldn't be with us; but—ahem—the Lord was with us anyway. Seems as if our congregation at prayer meetings are not what they ought to be.

(Dan crosses and looks intently at the Judge; Hope exits with her sewing.)

Mrs. Mulhall—(as she places a chair.) Won't you have a chair?

Judge Strong—No. I stopped only a minute to see you on a matter of business.

(Mrs. Mulhall twists her apron and frowns nervously.)

Dan—(firmly.) I, too, want to see you, Judge Strong, on a matter of business.

Judge Strong—Ah!—well—ah—

Dan—I hear that you are to foreclose the mortgage on this little home of Widow Mulhall's, and I want to ask you if you had not better reconsider the matter.

Judge Strong—(drawing himself haughtily to his full height.) It would not be—ah—business, and Brother Matthews, ah—allow me to ask you if you—ah—consider this as coming under your pastoral duties.

(Meanwhile Mrs. Mulhall weeps.)

Dan—(with clinched fists.) Sir, this minute I have the evidence to prove to the world that you are a thief. You, Judge Strong, an elder in Strong Memorial Church, have tried to rob a crippled Irish boy and his widowed mother of their home and their garden, their only means of support.

(Mrs. Mulhall sits up astonished and shakes her fist at the Judge; the Judge squirms and coughs; Dan crosses within striking distance, with clenched fist. Just then the Judge draws a revolver from his hip pocket.)

Dan—Don't you dare, (takes revolver from him.)

Judge Strong—You're a liar—I'll—I'll have the law on you. I'll put you out of the Christian ministry. I'll—I'll—have you arrested if you assault me—I'll—I'll—I'll—

Mrs. Mulhall—(shaking her fist under the Judge's nose.) The Devil you won't.

Dan—(quietly.) I have considered all of that, too. Just try it and you will stir up such a feeling in Corinth that they will drive you out of this community. You can't do it and live here, Judge Strong. You have too much at stake to risk it; you won't have me arrested; you can't afford it, sir.

Judge Strong—What evidence have you against me, you impudent, gal darned fool?

Dan—Yesterday Dr. Oldham received a letter from Mike McGowan, Mrs. Mulhall's brother, in reply to a request from the Dr. that he help pay the interest on the mortgage, which you hold. He wrote us that he paid you \$850 the day that he was leaving town, just after the burial of Jack Mulhall. You, sir, were to fix up the papers and present them to his sister as a surprise. He said, you being an elder in the church,

that he trusted you. And here you have been taking every cent that this poor family could earn as interest on their already paid mortgage. I feel sure that these good people, for my sake and for the sake of all Christ loving people, will keep this matter quiet—providing you sir—return the mortgage and every cent of money that has been paid you as interest.

(Mrs. Mulhall exclaims at intervals and shakes her fist at the Judge. The Judge laughs nervously.)

Judge Strong—Ah!—ha—ah—hah—what proof have you but the word of a villanious Irish man? Ha! a long way that would go against me—for thirty years an elder in Strong Memorial Church.

Dan—(seizing him by the collar.) Judge Stronge, I am sorry for you that you are so hardened by such deeds that you cannot see the seriousness of the situation. Your banker, Colonel Dunwood, cashed a draft for Mike McGowan with his gold and certifies the very next day this gold was deposited to your credit. Dr. Oldham and I have been to see him and he says that he can produce sufficient evidence to send you where you belong.

Judge Strong—(very nervous but impudent). You are a fool—a confounded fool. Some preacher you are, you Ozark backwoodser. You have disgraced our Christian cause by too much concern for this Irish Catholic family; then you suddenly became deeply interested in that outcast of a Conner's girl; and now I hear that you, the Minister of Strong Memorial Church, are paying court to that nurse gal, Hope Farwell. She is not a decent woman or she would not associate with the people she does. She has never been to church since coming here. Ah! It's not very strong in the faith ye are, or you wouldn't be so easily led astray. If you would attend some of the meetings of our Ladies' Aid and hear what they have to say about these women, you would get your eyes opened. Now here you come to the height of your impudence by accusing your Elder of theft. You shall answer for this, hear me! You shall answer for it.

Dan—And you, Judge Strong, shall answer for your insults to my friends, these good women. At present you shall not mention them again. I have been speaking in the interest of Mr. McGowan. Confine your remarks to that subject, please.

Judge Strong—Too long I have been an Elder and faithful member of Strong Memorial for any one to do me any harm. I have no further remarks to make and as for you—young man—I might as well tell you that your time is about up in Corinth. I'll take mighty good care that you don't get another church in our brotherhood. I'll show you that preachers get along better when they attend to their own affairs. (starts to leave.)

Dan—I cannot believe, Judge Strong, that you will force my friends to take this matter into court, but we will do so if I do not receive from you by night the proper papers, and every cent that you have stolen from Mrs. Mulhall. (Judge Strong exits shaking cane at Dan. Mrs. Mulhall rolls up her sleeves and shakes her fist at the Judge.)

CURTAIN.

Act IV.

SCENE—Dan's study at night. The furnishings of the room consist of a bookcase, many books, library table, waste basket, lighted lamp, easy chairs, piano, fishing outfit in one corner of the room.

Dan is seated at the table working on a manuscript, which he writes, reads and throws in the waist basket. He looks very much fatigued. Dr. Abbot enters and a look of glad surprise comes on his face.

Dr. Abbott—Hello, Parson. Excuse my intrusion without knocking. I have a drive to make and it is such a beautiful night I thought that you would like to go along and be my hitching post.

Dan—Thank you, Harry, but I am expecting an important caller to-night so I must stay at home. Besides I haven't been able to make my notes on my sermon yet. Harry, this Christian Ministry is a puzzle to me at times.

Dr. Abbott—(laughing aloud.) From your looks you evidently need to have something fixed. What is it, liver?

Dan—Not mine! I don't believe that I have one.

Dr. Abbott—(seating himself, fills pipe, smokes.) You don't need to have one in order to suffer from liver troubles. Speaking professionally, my opinion is that you suffer more from other people's troubles than from your own.

Dan—And what do you, prescribe when it is the other fellow's?

Dr. Abbott—Oh, there's a difference of opinion in the profession. The old Dr. for instance would prescribe a split bamboo and a can of flies for bait.

Dan—(smiling.) And you?

Dr. Abbott—Just a pipe and a book.

Dan—(sadly.) I fear your treatment would not agree with my constitution.

Dr. Abbott—Pardon me, Brother Matthews, I meant no slur upon your personal convictions—touching—

Dan—(interrupting sharply). Brother Matthews. I thought that we had agreed that I was to be only Dan to you. It is bad enough to be dodged and shunned by every one in town without you rubbing it in. As for my personal convictions, they have nothing to do with the case. In fact, my system does not permit me to have personal convictions.

Dr. Abbott—This system of yours seems to be in a bad way to-night, Dan. What is wrong with it?

Dan—Wrong with it? Wrong with my system? Man, alive. Don't you know that this is heresy? What can be wrong with my system? Doesn't it relieve me of the responsibility of right and wrong? Relieve me of personal convictions; make goodness my profession? I am paid for being good. My system says that your pipe and perhaps your book are bad—are sinful. I have nothing to do with it. I only obey and draw my salary.

Dr. Abbott—(soothingly.) Oh, well, there's the old Dr.'s remedy. It's probably better.

Dan—(growlingly.) I tried that the other day.

Dr. Abbott—Worked, didn't it?

Dan—(grinning.) At first the effects seemed to be very beneficial, later I found that it slightly aggravated the complaint.

Dr. Abbott—(smiling.) Suppose you try a little physical exercise, working in the garden or—

Dan—(in mock tragic.) Suicide. (both laugh heartily.)

Dr. Abbott—I guess I have located your liver trouble, alright. When are the elders to call?

Dan—To-night. Did you know?

Dr. Abbott—(nodding). I have been expecting it for several days. I guess that you are about the only one in Corinth who hasn't been.

Dan—Why didn't you tell me?

Dr. Abbott—If I can avoid it I never tell a patient of a coming operation, until it is time to operate, then it is all over before they have time to get nervous.

Dan—(shudder). I have certainly been on the table today. I believe that I ought to talk it out with some one.

Dr. Abbott—I believe that I have heard all of the wicked gossip that is going. I am afraid of it, Dan. You'll have to be mighty careful. I know how you feel. All that you say of the church system is true—too true. You haven't seen the worst of it yet, by a good deal.

Dan—Do you suppose that Miss Farwell will be made to suffer because of her interest in that poor girl?

Dr. Abbott—If Miss Farwell continues to live with Grace Conner at Mrs. Mulhall's, there is not a respectable home in this town that will receive her.

Dan—(warmly.) My God! Are the people blind? Can't the church see what a beautiful—what a Christ like thing she is doing?

Dr. Abbott—You know Grace Conner's history. What reason is there to think that it will be any different in Miss Farwell's case, so far as the attitude of the community is concerned?

Dan—(walking the floor.) Then am I to understand that my friendship with Miss Farwell will mean—this is terrible Harry. I can't believe it; it is the spirit of it that matters. I never dreamed that such a thing could happen. That Grace Conner's life should be ruined by the wicked carelessness of these people is enough, but that they should take the same attitude toward Miss Farwell, simply because she is seeking to do the Christian thing that the church will not do, is—I tell you it's monstrous.

Dr. Abbott—Yes, I know, Dan, but some people will gossip you know. So it has been since the world began. But, Dan, I feel that you have had enough for today, old boy.

(Dr. Abbott rises, pats Dan on the shoulder then goes to piano and plays. Dan crosses and stands gazing out of the window. Dr. Oldham enters unobserved and sits down. When the music ceases both turn and see Dr. Oldham.)

Dan—(shaking hands.) Good evening Dr., Mighty glad to see you. Harry, you have done me good, your music has given me faith, hope and peace.

Dr. Abbott—(reaching for his hat and gloves.) Really I never intended stopping two seconds. I have another call to make yet to-night. I'm sorry that I can't spend the evening with you and Dan.

(Dr. Abbott says good night and exits.)

Dr. Oldham—(turning to Dan). I thought you would be needing me, Dan.

Dan—So you have heard then?

Dr. Oldham—Yes, yes, you know Martha belongs to the Ladies Aid.

Dan—Weil, Dr., I wish you would tell me—what I have done or not done? For what shall I blame myself? My ministry according to the teachings of Jesus Christ is so dear to me, and now I am cast out in this fashion. How do you see it, Dr.

Dr. Oldham—It is your blindness and goodness, boy. I always knew that it would come.

Dan—You have always known?

Dr. Oldham—Yes. For a half of a century I have observed the spirit of this institution, mind you not the spirit of all the people in this institution. There are some people like Judge Strong in every church. They worship an institution, not a God. Dan, you have done more good in this community than you realize, but at the same time you have stirred up the wrath of the Devil. Why, boy, don't you know that he has long ago appointed Judge Strong as his assistant here in Corinth? (They both laugh.)

Dan—But what am I to do, Dr.? (holding up large envelope.) Here is my resignation to Strong Memorial Church.

Dr. Oldham—Well there are still other churches.

Dan—You mean—

Dr. Oldham—I mean that you are not the only preacher that has been talked about by this church, and branded by the official board with the mark of the devil, in the name of the Lord.

Dan—Dr., is this the Ministry? I have done nothing wrong. (Holding up another envelop.) This is a refusal to a church in Chicago. Can't you see what this has done for me? I'm done with it. I'm going back to the hills to open the mine on Dewy Bald and in this way help to serve mankind. There, Dr., I can worship God in the true spirit.

(A knock is heard.)

Dr. Oldham—Hush! I shall just move my chair back here if you don't mind. (Moves to an obscure corner of the room.)

Dan—(opening the door). Come in, Brother Jordan, come in.

(Elder Jordan enters greatly agitated, drops cane, trembles, speaks in a weak voice.)

Elder Jordan—I-I-came-about Brother Strong, you know.

Dan—Yes?

Elder Jordan—A bad business, Brother Matthews. Too bad, too bad. Poor Brother Strong. Brother Matthews, I want to ask you to use your influence with these people to keep this sad affair from getting out. Do you think that they will insist on bringing—ah—ahem—on Brother Strong if he complies to your request?

Dan—And why should you wish this matter kept a secret?

Elder Jordan—(blankly). Why? Why? Why? Why, on account of the church, of course. Judge Strong is one of our leaders—and an elder. He has been for years. It would ruin us—ruin us.

Dan—Nevertheless he is a thief.

Elder Jordan—(trembling). Brother Matthews—Brother Matthews—I—protest. Such language applied to an elder is unchristian, you know the scriptures.

Dan—Is it not true?

Elder Jordan—Ahem? Ahem! Brother Strong may have made an—ah—mistake, may have—ah—done wrong, but the church, the church, we must think of the good name of the church. Coming so soon after the revival too.

Dan—Am I to understand then that the church will keep this man in his place as an elder? That you will protect him when you know his true character?

Elder Jordan—(staring blankly). Why, why, how could we get along without him?

Dan—How can you get along with him?

Elder Jordan—But there isn't a man in Corinth, who has done so much for the missionary cause. No, no we must be more careful, Brother Matthews. But really, I must be going Brother Matthews.

Dan—Then for the sake of his contributions and because of his position in the community, the church will shield him?

Elder Jordan—(squirming uneasily). Really, I must be going.

Dan—Is that what you mean?

Elder Jordan—Why—I don't think for the good of our church here in Corinth and for the good of the cause, that it would be a good policy to make this matter public. Brother Strong will be here presently to make restitution. We must be charitable and forgiving, Brother Matthews, you must not be too hard on him. Are these people—ah—determined to push the matter?

Dan—No. All they want is that which belongs to them. I was simply asking to see how the church would look upon it when it touches an elder. POLICY? You have explained it clearly.

Elder Jordan—(stiffly as the danger is over). Ahem! Ahem! I fear Brother Matthews, that you are not—ah—not—entirely in sympathy with our brotherhood. Ahem! Ahem! the tone of your sermons has been I may say, ah—questioned by a good many of us, and your attitude toward the board has not been as cordial as we feel that we have a right to expect.

Dan—Do you speak from personal experience, sir.

Elder Jordan—Ah! No. Indeed not, Brother Matthews, but Brother Strong has felt for sometime past that you—ah—ahem—have treated him rather coldly. A lack of harmony between a pastor and an elder is very bad—ah—very bad. And so considering everything—we—that is Brother Strong—that is the church board think best that your relations with Memorial Church shall be severed.

Dan—(quietly). And when was the action taken?

Elder Jordan—The day before the revival closed. We wished to have the benefit of Brother Sigma's advice before he left. He met with us and we considered the matter very carefully—ah—ahem—very prayerfully. I was appointed to tell you.

Dan—Of course the board will give me a letter?

Elder Jordan—Ahem! Ahem! we ah—discussed that also, and we

feel that we cannot recommend you to any church in our brotherhood. It would be very damaging to us to so, very damaging.

Dan—Is it charged that my teachings have been false to the doctrines of Christianity as taught by Christ?

Elder Jordan—I cannot discuss that, Brother Matthews. They are not such teachings as our brotherhood wants. Really, Brother Matthews, I must be going.

Dan—Does the church, sir, believe that my character is bad?

Elder Jordan—No, sir. No, sir. But you have really been—ah—unjudicious. There has been so much talk, you know.

Dan—Who has talked?

Elder Jordan—These things follow a man through life. It would reflect upon us to recommend a man of bad repute.

Dan—For the same reason that you keep in a high office in the church, a man, who is an unrepentable thief.

Elder Jordan—(rising). Really, Brother Matthews, I cannot listen to such words about our elder—really, I must be going. Here comes Brother Strong now. (footsteps are heard.)

Dan—I beg your pardon. I was thinking aloud. Stay, Brother Jordan. Judge Strong and I won't keep you waiting long.

(Elder sits again; Dr. Oldham, unobserved, chuckles and grins his disgust throughout the conversation.)

Judge Strong—(haughtily entering). Well, here are your papers. I suppose that Brother Jordan has told you that your services here were no longer desired. Eh! Heh! A nice business you have made of yourself.

Elder Jordan—Really I must be going.

Dan—Wait just a minute. Judge Strong, you are the only man with whom I am not at peace. I cannot leave Corinth with anything between us.

Judge Strong—(impudently—. Well?

Dan—I wish to ask a favor, sir, one that I am sure you will grant.

Judge Strong—(arrogantly). Well, out with it. It's growing late and I do not care to be detained longer by your foolishness.

Elder Jordan—Ahem! Hem! Yes, Brother Matthews, we must be going.

Dan—You will remember sir, the last time that I saw you, that you made grave charges against three women, who are my friends.

Judge Strong—I repeated only the common—

Dan—Wait please. This is a matter between you and me. Won't you please retrace those words?

Judge Strong—Stand out of my way, you fool, (trying to get to the door). I have no time for this, sir.

Dr. Oldham—(aside to himself). The darned old fool.

Judge Strong—I have absolutely nothing to take back, sir. If that is all I shall go.

Elder Jordan—Yes—yes, ah—heh—

Dan—(fiercely). NO! That is not all. (Dan collars the Judge and stands ready to strike.)

Judge Strong—What do you mean? Take your hands off of me!

Dan—Perhaps you will understand when I tell you that I LOVE HOPE FARWELL AND INTEND TO MAKE HER MY WIFE.

(Elder Jordan opens his mouth wide and throws up his hands in astonishment.)

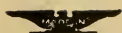
Dan—You unspeakable cur, I have felt sorry for you because of your warped and twisted nature; because you seem so incapable of being anything better than you are. I have given you a chance to act like a man, and you—you laugh at me. You have escaped from your theft from that poor widow; you have escaped from, God knows, how many crimes. But now in the name of the good people that you have slandered and in the name of those that you have ruined, I'm going to give you what a contemptible rascal as you deserves.

Elder Jordan—I'm going— ah—(exits backwards.)

(Dan throws Judge Strong to the floor; Judge yells "HELP!" until he is beat lifeless; Dr. Oldham watches, much amused; Dan draws back and Dr. Oldham goes to him).

Dr. Oldham—You've made a mighty good job of it, lad, a mighty good job. Lord, how I envied you. Help me out with him and I'll chuck him in his buggy and take him home. Won't it be fun to tell what an accident our honorable Judge has met? (laughs loudly. Holding out his hand to Dan). Accept my congratulations, boy, and my wishes that you and Hope may happily travel for many, many, many years to come over the trail that is "Nobody Knows How Old."

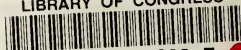
CURTAIN.



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